

WESTERN USA II: PACIFIC COAST

This region of five states claims the only island state, the largest state, the most populous state, the highest and lowest continental altitudes (Mt. McKinley, Alaska—Death Valley, California), and the widest range of latitudes with one state near the Equator and another near the North Pole.

The three coastal states of Washington, Oregon, and California are the most populated states of this region because of their milder climates. One climate is favorable to the growing of wheat, citrus fruits, and vegetables in the fertile southern California valleys, which can be easily irrigated by nearby mountain streams. Northern California, Washington, and Oregon

have a marine climate which is good for dairy farming and fruit growing. This area is also rich in energy resources—petroleum, natural gas, and hydroelectric power.

Hawaii, located near the equator in the Pacific Ocean, has a pleasantly warm tropical climate the year round. The state is a chain of mountainous islands formed from lava that erupted from the ocean floor. Although tourism is its chief source of income, Hawaii sends sugar and pineapple around the world.

The northernmost state of the United States, Alaska, is rich in natural resources. They are

oil, gold, forests, tin, fishing, and fur trapping. Alaska, a mountainous state, has a cold climate that ranges from a milder climate in the south to a frigid climate in the far north.



Fill in the missing words.

1. The five states of this region are _____.

2. The body of water that forms Alaska's northern coastline is the _____.

3. _____ is the only island state.

4. The highest landform in North America is _____.

The lowest is _____.

5. _____ is a state that was formed from volcanoes.

6. _____, _____, and _____ are natural resources of Alaska.

7. Dairy farming and fruit growing are aided by the _____ climate in the northwest.

8. Wheat, citrus fruits, and vegetables grow in southern California because of _____, _____, and _____.

9. The chief source of income in Hawaii is _____.

10. The state nearest the equator is _____.

On a separate sheet of paper, answer the following questions.

11. Explain why this region has the widest range of latitudes of all the states.

12. Give three ways the Pacific Ocean influences the states of this region.

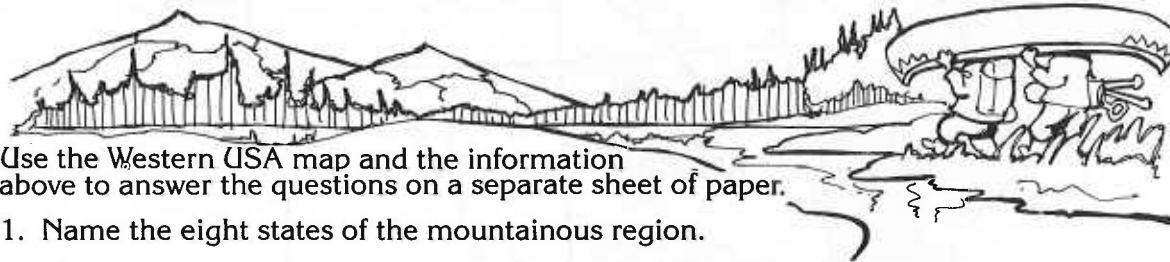
WESTERN USA I: THE MOUNTAINOUS REGION

There are thirteen states in the Western Region which is divided in two groups—the mountainous states and the Pacific coastal states. Nearly half of the land area of the United States is in this region.

The mountainous region includes eight states. Mountains dominate the resources, climate, economy, and natural beauty of this region. The Rocky Mountains extend through six of the eight states, though they have different ranges and names. Because of the mountains, the principal source of income is mining, not manufacturing. Most of the nation's silver and copper and half of its gold are mined here, as well as coal, iron, and uranium. More important shale oil reserves in this region are the largest in the world. These shale reserves may one day be a vital source of oil for America.

Mountains influence the west's climate. Rain clouds form over the Pacific and the air currents that move them cannot cross the Rockies, so the rainfall averages less than twenty inches per year. Most of the region is steppe. A steppe is both a short grass region and type of climate. The steppe climate is dry, with hot summers and cold winters. Parts of Arizona, Nevada, and New Mexico are even drier and have a desert climate. Without river irrigation and dams, crops could not be grown in much of the region. Cattle and sheep farming are important sources of income. Sheep can graze on short grasses. Cattle can be bred and raised to eighteen months, then shipped to the central states for corn feeding.

Though the population of the west is increasing steadily, it is not as densely populated as other regions. It covers 864,000 square miles, yet there are fewer people living in this region than Pennsylvania. However, millions of tourists visit the region each year to view scenic wonders like the Rocky Mountains, the many national parks, and the Grand Canyon, a wide, mile-deep gorge carved through the centuries by a river.



Use the Western USA map and the information above to answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Name the eight states of the mountainous region.
2. Which states of the region border Canada? Mexico?
3. Locate the Grand Canyon. Which river at its base is responsible for its formation?
4. What is shale?
5. How do the mountains affect the climate and economy of the region?
6. The Great Salt Lake of Utah is salty for the same reasons that the oceans are. Rivers and streams carry salt from the soil as they flow across it. Does the Salt Lake empty into another body of water?
If not, what do you think happens to the salt in it?
7. The only place in the country where four states meet at a central point is known as the "four corners" area. Which four states of this region meet at a central point?

